

Todor Kuljić: Tranzicija uma. Sociološki ogledi o promeni opredeljenja humanističke inteligencije u Srbiji [The Transition of Reason. Sociological perspectives on the change in the commitment of humanist intelligentsia in Serbia], Zrenjanin, Gradska narodna biblioteka (Biblioteka Polis), 2014. 197 pp. – ISBN 978-86-7284-151-0.

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This volume assembles the writings that the author, Professor Todor Kuljić (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Sociology), has published in scholarly and specialist periodicals during the past twenty years, and which are not included in his previous books.¹ They aim to apply some general theoretical perspectives in order to explain domestic/Serbian circumstances. The book deals with three issues: (1) intellectuals and sociology, (2) the Left and (3) conservatism in Serbia. Broadly speaking, there are three controversial points, which mark the “transition of reason” in Serbia: socialism, revisionism and anti-fascism.

At the heart of the book is the problem of commitment of the social sciences’ intelligentsia in Serbia after the collapse of European socialism and the orientation towards the Left, which is analysed in the first chapter (*The intellectuals and sociology*). On the question – how have intellectuals reacted to the changes imposed by the new epochal consciousness and the polarization of social forces? – Kuljić answers: in different ways. Some have made the conversion from left to right, according to the law of self-preserving mimicry, others have gradually matured, and there were also those who insisted on their earlier commitment (Vojin Milić, Ljubomir Tadić). As the author stresses, a critical review of the transition of humanist intellectuals in Serbia has to be explained historically, taking major global and local processes in account.

The second chapter (*The Left*) deals with the position of the Left in neo-liberalism. The civil war in the newly independent states of the former SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) has highlighted with considerable clarity the effects of various versions of historical revisionism. Chauvinist reconstruction of the past has come to be accepted as normal, while manipulation within theories of totalitarianism has been taken to extremes because socialism has additionally been demonized as a fatal historical internationalist fallacy of the Balkan peoples. Serbian changes in the perception of fascism are closely related to general changes in the perception of socialism. Until the 19th century, socialism was a utopia, and its place was somewhere in the future. Today socialism is placed in the past, as a totalitarian illusion. However it must be said that socialism (or, emotionally said, communism) is increasingly being officially interpreted as a diversion from the normal course of development of Eastern Europe, or as a new bogey-man.

¹ See the following reviews: Mastering the Past. Causes and Ways of Changing the Image of History at the End of the 20th Century. In: *INCS* 10 (2004), 17, pp. 64–67; Memory Culture. Theoretical Explanations of the Use of the Past in the West Balkans. In: *INCS* 14 (2008), 21, p. 122; Die Erinnerung an den Titoismus. Zwischen Diktat und Widerstand. In: *INCS* 18 (2012), 25, pp. 200–203; The Anatomy of the Right: Selected Newspaper Columns, Book Reviews and Interviews 1978-2013. In: *INCS* 19 (2013), 26, p. 166.

The third chapter deals with conservatism in contemporary Serbia. The author first considers contemporary post-socialist Serbian monarchical culture. Serbian monarchism was functional in the 19th century, but became an anachronism after the First World War. Today, the desire to restore the monarchy reveals an attempt to solidify an unstable national identity. The other parts of this chapter deal with different segments of contemporary restorative memory culture. Memory culture has radically changed in the new Balkan states also along with the attitude towards fascism. A new reality that opens the door to the future always demands a new past. Anti-fascism, anti-communism, anti-capitalism and anti-totalitarianism, ideological patterns which shaped sociological thinking in the 20th century, are still active in Serbia as well as in the other new states in the region. Thus, the new memory culture has opened the door to the rehabilitation of various "Quisling" regimes. Fascism can be maintained in memory (by cautioning against its contemporary forms), relativised (by likening it to the other crimes), or ignored (considered a non-essential or ephemeral episode in the national history). There are however other versions of neutralizing fascism, i.e. via its externalization. Contemporary Anti-Fascism has been nationalized everywhere in the region, relativised, de-communised and de-centralised. Macedonians and Albanians cleanse anti-fascism of communists, the pro-Serbian part of Montenegro favours reconciliation between partisans and Chetniks, Serbia and Croatia legalise non-communist, Domobran- and Chetnik-style anti-fascism. The ruling national parties and nationalist elites either ignored or openly nationalised antifascism in that sense, as Kuljić stresses in the conclusion.